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Guide

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A Catholic Tragedy

Father Charles Davis frequently appeared in these pages and we ask the fervent prayers of those he once helped to pray for him now. While we must deplore his extreme action and disagree with the theological position he arrived at, we can sympathize with him and, to a degree, understand something of the intolerable pressures that appear to have swamped him. Surely he is not alone in his revulsion at that inexplicable treatment of truth and persons which some find compatible with service to Christ and his Church. A recent correspondent writes:—

“You most likely are staggering, with me, from the blow of Charles Davis leaving his service to the Church . . . Those of us who know Charles are aware of the agonizing struggle that must have preceded his decision. We share the blame he must have felt at the things that are done and said in the name of Christ. He has our deepest understanding and sympathy, and we hope that even from ‘outside’ he will continue to help us.

“But although we see what he sees, and live with it and suffer from it daily, we cannot do what he has done. The Church is still the Church, and in this time of breaking down we must stay and work and pray that something may arise from the wreckage. Whatever happens, we are part of what is happening, the guilt as well as the suffering is ours.

“We can only go on and hope—with the kind of hope that means a full commitment to what is hoped for—that what we suffer will also be the means of cleansing our common guilt. What sort of remnant will be left in the end we cannot tell, but it is from this hope-filled, grace-blessed remnant that the new people will grow. As brothers with Charles, we pray for him. ‘Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.’ ”

It is good Catholic teaching to listen to your critic to discover whether there is any validity to his criticism. I suggest that the human element in the Catholic Church might profitably examine its basic attitude towards truth and person.

JOHN T. McGINN, C.S.P.

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Catechetics For The Real World

Gabriel Moran, F.S.C.

Catechetical Movement Enters New Stage

By almost any standard the catechetical movement has been a rousing success. New textbooks and catechetical materials are appearing at an ever more accelerated pace. Graduate programs in theology and religious education are flooded with applicants (at least for summer sessions). Various kinds of institutes, workshops and in-service courses are provided for both Catholic school and CCD teachers. Cities like New York, Chicago and San Francisco are making massive efforts in well-organized programs to improve the over-all quality of religion teaching.

The interest of teachers in these programs can be illustrated by an incident at our Manhattan campus this year. Brother Luke Salm had last year provided a low-cost, non-credit course of Saturday morning catechetical lectures. An exceptionally large class of 175 teachers had attended. Before the start of this year, he had almost decided not to give the same course, since he did not think there would still be a market for it. At the last moment and with hardly any publicity beyond word of mouth, the course was again offered. On the first Saturday morning, 600 teachers appeared for class, and the number steadily rose in the next few sessions.

It is beyond question that a great concern with religious education has been generated in a very short time. What we must ask ourselves, however, is whether we are keeping up with the swift tides of change affecting our society and our Church. Unless those leading this movement constantly deepen their own understanding, the "new approach" they are trying to share with others may grow stale. The swifter the revolution, the greater the danger that the bold radicals will quickly become the settled establishment. The only way they can avoid this tendency is to expose themselves to other points of view. Two tests of a movement's vitality are whether its most fundamental axioms are being subjected to constant criticism, and whether its language is one that grows organically out of men's lives rather than one artificially created for a particular segment of life.

The catechetical movement at its present stage and for its own good is in need of continual and severe criticism. To be worth-

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while, this criticism must eventually be self-criticism, but the outside critic may be able to supply some of the material and incentive for such criticism. Catholic theology, it seems to me, should be able to supply more of these starting points for critical self-reflection than it has up to now.

To many people, a fundamental criticism of contemporary catechetics would seem shockingly disloyal or utterly incomprehensible. For great numbers of us engaged in theological and catechetical work, there was a memorable moment — two, five or ten years ago — when we were liberated from a stifling system of bad theology. Through some great teacher (e.g., Johannes Hofinger) we discovered how simple, meaningful and beautiful the main point of Christianity is. Given the choice between the abstractions of late scholasticism and "the biblical-liturgical approach," it is unthinkable to us that anyone would fail to choose the latter.

OTHER CHOICES

The only trouble here is the assumption that there are no other options. More precisely, what is wrong is to assume that there is a biblical-liturgical approach, that is, a single approach with a well defined content. It may well be that there are other ways of teaching Catholicism in which the Bible and the liturgy are far less conspicuous but (partly for that very reason) much more effective. Our instincts are right in wanting students to "respond to the love of God revealed in his plan of salvation." But constant mention of this objective may make it impossible ever to reach it. Saying all the nice new biblical-liturgical phrases may be the wrong thing to do with the adolescent in urban America.

The history of the modern catechetical movement has been recounted many times. It is usually said that there have been two great phases in this development. The first stage, in the early part of the century, sought to improve the methods of teaching religion. The more important phase of the movement began when concern was directed to what was being taught. Josef Jungmann is usually given credit for initiating this examination of the message of religion teaching. Recently, some catechetical leaders in European and missionary countries

have spoken of a third stage, a new era in the catechetical movement. There is, however, a lack of agreement on the precise character of this third stage, and if it has begun, when it began.

Whatever may be true in other countries, it seems certain that in America teachers are not getting ready to settle down happily with their improved methods and content. Perhaps this is the time for a peculiar American contribution to the progress of catechetics. Instead of looking to European leadership, we might (as Vincent Novak has recently written from Europe) have more confidence in American study, style and experimentation.

THE NEXT STAGE

My suggestion of a new stage in catechetical development is not at all new. I suspect, however, that the upheaval that is to come may be far greater than most catechetical leaders envision. Whereas they are thinking of smoothing out certain institutional and programmatic details, I believe the next stage may look more like a reversal of everything they have been trying to do. In fact, I think this development will be in line with the original suggestions made by Jungmann back in the 1930's. It will seem to be destructive only because much of the catechetical effort has been misdirected to "content" rather than to personal understanding on the part of teachers and students. What students think is important, but it is even more important *how* they think.

The proposal to improve the "content" of religion teaching was not an altogether bad one: maybe at one stage it was the best that could be made. But this statement of the problem gave the impression that there was a certain collection of Catholic things that could be placed in books and transferred into little children's heads. Without changing anyone's attitude, the wrong content could be replaced by the right content, and then everything would be settled again. Hence it should be possible through a few workshops to tell teachers what the right content was. They in turn would deliver this new content to their students.

As to where to find the new content, the answer seemed obvious: in the pages of

Holy Scripture, so long neglected in Catholic religion teaching. It would not, of course, be the Bible history of our youth or the mangled texts of the theology manuals, but instead the most up-to-date exegesis. By using the Word of God, one was guaranteed that he had the right content and the right language; one needed only to set it out properly.

In describing the pattern of development discernible in the Bible, exegetes had coined the somewhat barbarous phrase "salvation history." With amazing speed, this phrase became the Catholic catechetical catchword. But though, as a term to point to a genuine insight of biblical scholars, "salvation history" may be useful, as a practical equivalent to the new contents of the new catechetics the term is inadequate and misleading. It may be objected that "salvation history" is not to be given a narrow biblical meaning, but that it must be broadened and deepened and applied to the student's own life. I would entirely agree. If, however, this development is not to end up as a patch-work that once again obscures the gospel, we will have to ask questions from other and wider perspectives.

THE TEMPORAL ORDER

My concern is not to get a proper definition of salvation history, nor am I out to attack salvation history. My question is whether teachers and teachers of teachers are wrestling with the theological questions that underlie this and other frequently used phrases in catechetical writing.

Christian theologians in recent years have been engaged in the most serious examination of their basic concepts. They have been asking whether or not there are religious or Christian things at all, and how God's revelation-redemption is related to the whole temporal order. I fail to see how any of this is deeply affecting catechetics. I am not looking for a few new phrases out of Bonhoeffer's prison papers, but for a searching examination of the general orientation of religion teaching. Recently, for example, Kung and Schlette have suggested that we should speak of Israel and the institutional Church as the extraordinary way of salvation. Most men, it would seem, find their way to God outside this framework. The

history of Israel, Schlette goes on to point out, is not so much the history of salvation as the revelation of God's work—a work that goes beyond Israel and the Church. The issue in question here involves more than a juggling of words; it concerns fundamental attitudes. The direction in catechetics has been dictated by theological presuppositions that need re-examination.

This leads me to my main point of criticism. It seems to me that, generally speaking, catechetics is still engaged in trying to construct a world outside the real world of existing people. At a time when all the barriers are falling down, it is busily engaged in forming students within a religious world with a carefully arranged pattern of ideas and special words. An intricate series of "events" is studied from which students are to extract the "revealed truths" to be applied to the contemporary world. When it is found that the students are not ready to appreciate "salvation history," the teacher is then told to "come down to their level" and get them to the point where Christian truths can be taught ("pre-catechesis" is thus the big word today). This adaptation, which is increasingly being made, is a partial recognition of what is wrong, but the proposed solution is inadequate. What is needed is a fundamental reversal of thinking supported by a wider theoretical base.

THE REAL WORLD

Instead of encasing people within a set of answers and practices that separates the Christian from the world, religion teaching must start from the fact of our present situation. The Church can no longer be treated as a refuge of defense against a non-Catholic world of error. Today the Church's stance must be one of universal ecumenism, meeting men where they are and searching with them in a spirit of free inquiry for the truth that goes beyond any of us. Such a position neither affirms the rightness of everything going on in the modern world nor denies the Church's claim to uniqueness before God. But it seriously questions the notion that the catechist should form his students with all the right answers taken from the Bible and the liturgy.

The young person today finds himself standing in the midst of confusion, subjected

to tremendous pressures, and groping for some meaning to it all. The teacher of Christianity is the one who, we may hope, can speak the word that can help him to discover himself, his neighbor and God. The word that is effective may or may not be a biblical word; it may be a word that is never directly spoken. We are not called to lower ourselves temporarily to where people are; we start and end with the people because that is where God is.

If the enormous body of "content" we think it necessary to teach students is utterly unrelated to their lives, we might reconsider whether this really is the right content. I am not saying that the deficiencies of the students must be the measure of Christian teaching, nor am I denying that all teaching involves content and an attempt to teach specific things to students. It is too readily being assumed, however, that there is an easily identified collection of things that constitute the right subject matter for religion classes.

POINTERS TO REVELATION

From one point of view, we have far too much content, that is, things thought to be the proper and necessary teaching material. There is another sense in which we need much more content, that is, things that can be used as *pointers* to the revelation of God and man. In the hands of a competent teacher, all kinds of surprising things might enter into the content of religion teaching.

My remarks may possibly be interpreted as an assault upon the Bible and the liturgy, and an attempt to play down their importance in religious education. This is not my intention. I think that the Bible and the liturgy are supremely important for Christian teaching, but I also think that little good is done by wielding them as artificial instruments. Some of the most important things we can learn from Bible and liturgy are overlooked when we turn them into the sources for the new content.

When Holy Scripture is used this way, it tends to become rigidly systematized, whereas in fact it is quite an unsystematic book or collection of books. Scripture cannot be true to itself unless it points beyond itself; but used as the main subject matter in religion teaching, it becomes an end in itself.

It becomes the truths to be known rather than the pointer to what is going on. Scripture becomes hacked to pieces to fit into wall charts instead of being read and appreciated as magnificent literature.

Scripture is prayer and it is art; it is the Church's most beautiful expression of faith. It is the fecundating principle of all teaching; it is stories to delight little children and profound insights for mature adults. But Scripture is not something to grind one's way through again and again in every school year; it is not the pattern on which all textbooks and syllabuses are to be constructed. Holy Scripture is a high point of the inspiring religious literature of men; religion teaching must approach this point from many angles. Unless a more relaxed, organic and unselfconscious use is made of Scripture with young people in America today, we will fail to communicate that reality which Scripture so beautifully embodies.

THE LITURGY

Similar but even worse difficulties arise when the liturgy is made the source of content for religion class. Liturgy is not things to be used; it is prayer and worship. What the liturgy should first of all teach us is style and spirit. The liturgy is a great teacher because it does not concentrate grimly on saying all the right things that supposedly should be said. It lets the truth emerge out of reverence, artistry, dialogue, play and silence. Anyone who would successfully teach the Christian faith must be filled with the spirit of the liturgy. He must understand that all his teachings are fragile human experiences that have their culmination in the liturgical meeting with God. How many liturgical things he says is quite another matter. Most of the current attempts to drag the liturgy into all religion teaching are even more artificial than the uses made of Scripture.

Some people may find these reflections pointless and irrelevant, or simply not applicable to themselves. Others, however, may see these criticisms as shaking the whole structure with which they are working. These latter ask: if you are so smart and want to tear down everything, tell us something better that you can put in its place. My answer (or evasion, if you like) is that

we must keep on doing what we are doing, but at the same time begin to question more deeply our own understanding of faith. It is not a question of throwing out some things and bringing in others. Piecemeal criticism only leads people to change the textbook or syllabus. These indeed may need changing, but the change will probably not help.

EXPERIMENT NEEDED

Instead of trying to cure our ills by changing the textbook, we ought to begin by realizing the limitations inherent in even the best of textbooks (as a Link or Novak is the first to admit). This in itself would be a great liberation. What needs changing is the attitude toward the textbook, so that teachers would have the confidence and understanding to adapt, synthesize and leave behind. The kind of questioning I have proposed here is not intended to destroy people's confidence, but to encourage them to look for their own answers through reading, reflection, discussion and experimentation, rather than to wait for the perfected new catechetics to descend from on high.

It may seem that, in suggesting more extensive theological inquiry, I am proposing an impossible ideal. We are having a difficult enough time trying to give simple courses of instruction to the tens of thousands of catechists needed. Can one seriously propose to move beyond the simplicity of Scripture to deeply theological concerns? My answer is that we can and we must, if

for no other reason than that of simplicity. If teacher training programs really dealt only with Scripture, they could remain relatively uncomplicated but they inevitably go beyond the scriptural to become entangled in new complications. It is not that I do not appreciate the great efforts being made to give teachers the new content. I simply think that the courses become unnecessarily complex for the average Christian and that a developed theology could actually simplify the courses.

QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED

Good Christian theology at its most theoretical and speculative tends to rejoin the simple Christian life in the flesh. Unlike any gnostic doctrine that promises salvation to those few who can grasp the secrets of the gods, Christianity maintains that the Word has become flesh. The Christian God is the one who deals with people in their wholeness and simplicity; a developed Christian theology always returns to this starting point. As Rahner has often said, it is the bad, half-done theology that gets into impossible complications, which the ordinary person finds unintelligible. Catechetics is in danger of becoming overburdened once more with the technicalities of the bad theology it sought to escape from. We need simplicity in religious education today, but the simplicity can re-emerge only through asking questions more difficult and profound than those we have asked up to the present.

TODAY'S SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

"Blessed be God day by day." This was a favorite line of the psalms for Pope John; sufficient for the day are its burdens, he said, and also it helps. And each day gives its special note of praise. And so we offer the sacrifice of this day.

*Joseph Nolan
National Catholic Reporter*

The Rite of Exorcism

Thomas M. Finn, C.S.P.

A homily prepared for a pilot catechumenate project. Father Finn played a major role in this successful experiment.

Christian life is a long and difficult journey back to Paradise. It is a pilgrimage, the record of which we have called the history of salvation. That record is written in the still pages of the Bible, in the living pages of the Liturgy, and in the flesh and blood pages of each man's life.

Recall for a moment something with which you are familiar: The ancient biblical pilgrimages. Abraham. He left everything he knew, everything which clung to him and to which he clung. Called and led by God he journeyed in the desert, following steadfastly the unseen footsteps of God in the sand. Where was he going? To the Land of Promise. And there was struggle at every point of the journey, struggle with what we might call the enemy within and the enemy without.

Moses and the People of Israel. They, too, left everything they knew—the land of Egypt, which for them was a land of darkness, slavery, death, and that ultimate of evils: sin. Called and led by God, they wandered through endless days and nights in the desert. Headed for the Promised Land, and both fed and led on their way by God, they nonetheless were pursued by everything they left. Liberated from what Egypt represented, they nevertheless constantly longed for what Scripture calls the "fleshpots." Their pilgrimage was marked by unremitting struggle, the struggle between the Land of Promise and the Land of Exile, the ancient struggle, between Good

and Evil. But the Lord was with them—in the pillar of fire, in food, in water, in forgiveness, in strength: "For the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Jesus himself was the Pilgrim. St. Paul describes his pilgrimage: "Though he was by nature God, (Jesus) did not consider being equal to God a thing to be clung to, but emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave and being made like unto men. And appearing in the form of man he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross. Therefore God also has exalted him and has bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth . . ." (Phil. 2:5-9).

His route led out from the Father across the land of this world and back to the Father. His life was marked with many journeys. You know them as well as I: the flight into Egypt and the return; the pilgrimage from Nazareth to Jerusalem when he was twelve; the forty days in the desert; the continual travel of his public life. And at every point he was pitted against all of the forces of evil which infest men and, indeed, the very world itself. The passage we have read from St. Matthew is but a short example. Jesus' road led to the final struggle recapitulated in the passion, on the cross, and in the tomb. He himself characterized this final stage of the struggle as the hour of the powers of darkness and of the Prince

of this world. Yet the road led beyond, to resurrection where death and evil itself was swallowed up in victory.

You, too, are on a pilgrimage. You have been called by Christ in his Church, and you have answered with faith-filled commitment. You have followed the lead of the Holy Spirit and presented your minds and hearts as living tablets on which he inscribes the law of love. You have entered into the community of the Church—and the Church has confided to you her belief, the Scriptures—her teaching, the Creed—her prayer, the Our Father—her faith, the Light of the world. The Church has showed you the Lord and you have followed him with steadfast and faithful steps.

STRUGGLE WITH EVIL

This evening marks a milestone in your pilgrimage, for the Church opens up before you another part of the road to baptism: the struggle with evil. The circumstances are most somber and solemn. The prayers and gestures, the questions and answers which we are celebrating this evening are called "exorcism." It is an ancient rite, traceable in its essentials back to the New Testament itself. Conceived from the earliest days as, so to speak, the dark side of baptism, it is filled with images foreign to us: the valley of darkness, the Serpent, Satan-Beelzebub, the two kingdoms, the two masters, wrestling against the Principalities and Powers, the armor of God.

Why this somber solemnity? The Church would have us know two things with absolute clarity. First, evil pursues every man. It followed Abraham. It pursued Moses and the Israelites. It hounded Christ. It harries us: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood." And what is this evil? The Gospels present it as the eternal clash between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God: Satan and Christ locked in a cosmic combat for the loyalty and love of man. Sts. John and Paul in the Epistles present it as the "world, the flesh, and the devil." They do not mean "the world" quite as we would. Rather they mean the world sealed off from God, turned in on itself and on its own resources. That world lives inside each of us and it encircles us. It knows only selfishness and its resources are

dedicated to self. It is a world alien to, and untouched by, genuine love. By "flesh" the apostles do not mean our bodies exactly, but those primordial needs, drives, desires, which, if left ungoverned, conspire to degrade us. They reduce us not to the "human" but to the sub-human. In the figure of the devil or Satan John and Paul see all those forces—sometimes people—determined to keep us imprisoned in ourselves, in slavery to the flesh, strangers to the love of God and neighbor.

The world, the flesh, and the devil—this is the evil which pursues us, and against which we must struggle with relentless determination. But how can we, simple and weak as we are, have any chance of success? That brings us to the second thing which the church wants us to know with absolute clarity: we do not struggle alone. Did we not pray together in the psalms: "The Lord is with me; I fear not; what can man do against me? The Lord is with me to help me, and I shall look down on my foes. . . . Give me again the joy of your help, with the spirit of fervour sustain me"? Have we not also read of Jesus who cured the possessed man and cast out the devil? We have just finished reading about the armor of God, the girdle of truth, the breastplate of justice, the shield of faith. And we are just about to pray together: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. . . . Even though I walk in the dark valley, I fear no evil, for you are at my side."

IN CHRIST'S VICTORY

In a moment or two we will begin the actual exorcism. It is designed to assure you that Christ, who struggled in his own flesh, struggles now in you and with you. He was victorious then—we participate in his victory now. As I trace the sign of the cross over you, your sponsor will mark you on the forehead with the cross. The cross is the sign of Christ's ownership and protection. You are his property and he will fight for you. We, your sponsor and I, and through us, the Church, are your companions and allies. After the signing, I will then pray three times. First I will ask the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to guard you with vigilant loving-kindness.

Then, in the name, in the imitation, and in the power of Christ I will command the spirit of evil to leave you, and I will seal you with the sign of the cross against his return. Finally, I will pray that the Father will fill your darkness with light.

But none of this is automatic. If the spirit of evil which pursues you and infests you is to leave, and the Holy Spirit is to come, your free consent and cooperation is absolutely indispensable. You will be asked the most ancient questions in the entire liturgy in the Church: "Do you renounce Satan, his works, his enticements?" By your answers you express your free and loving consent to break with evil and to fight steadfastly for the rest of your life. Finally, I will anoint you on the right arm with the sign of the cross. This is to assure you that it is Christ with his whole Church who struggles both in you and at your side.

LOVING CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST

I have said that this evening is a milestone in your pilgrimage to the promised land of baptism. You re-enact in the liturgy the struggle with evil which will characterize your entire life. It is natural and right to think, "How do I know I will succeed?" There are no guarantees. There is only rugged confidence rooted in the Lord who dwells in the Church. For your struggle is his struggle, the Church's struggle, our struggle. Do not be afraid to fail just as you have not been afraid to go out of yourself on your pilgrimage to the Lord. You take a great risk, but anything to do with love involves a great risk. Should you fall, he, in his infinite mercy, is there to pick you up. Should you get lost in the darkness which infests all of us, the star of his mercy, which can be seen only in the darkness, is there to guide you. Did we not pray together? "Have mercy on me, God in your kindness. In your compassion

wipe out my offense. Oh wash me more and more from my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. . . . Oh God, put a steadfast Spirit in me."

One final word of encouragement. Should you fall after baptism, the central and unseen work of the sacrament of penance is this: to reunite the baptized sinner to Christ in his Church. It is he who acts through the Church to forgive. What happens in the dark confessional is the re-enactment, in mystery, of the poignant encounter between Jesus and the Penitent Woman.

THE FRIEND OF SINNERS

As St. Luke recounts it, Jesus was dining with Simon the Pharisee. A woman entered the room, bathed the feet of Jesus with her tears, dried them with her hair, kissed them, and then anointed them with ointment. Simon was upset that Jesus, were he truly a prophet, would let such a person even touch him. Knowing what Simon was thinking, Jesus told him of the money-lender who had two debtors. One owed 500 pieces of silver and the other, 50. Because neither could pay, he forgave both their debts. When Jesus asked Simon which of the two debtors in his judgment, would love the money-lender more, he answered, "He I suppose, to whom he forgave the more." Then Jesus came to the point: "Wherefore I say to you, her sins, many as they are, shall be forgiven her, because she has loved much. But he to whom little is forgiven, loves little." And then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." And they who were at table with him began to say within themselves, "Who is this man, who even forgives sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Lk. 7:47-50). Take courage, then, for he who loves much is forgiven much. Go in peace.

Pre-Catechumenate Instructions

Christian Marriage

Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P.

(THE FIFTEENTH INSTRUCTION IN OUR CURRENT SERIES)

The Christian life is living in union with Jesus Christ. He lives within each baptized Christian and he lives within all baptized Christians together. This life together is the Church, and man's life with Christ is the life of the Church. What Christ has done is to bring a new way of life into the world. Henceforth man can live his everyday life not alone, but sharing it with God, —making God the partner of his joys and sorrows, his companion in the adventure and growth that is life. He can do this because in Jesus Christ God has deliberately entered the life of man to stay. Through his presence in the Church, Christ makes it possible to transform everything in human life into a loving gift to God.

We are used to thinking about our life with God only in terms of "religious" acts, —things like prayer and worship and heroic sacrifices. Actually everything we do as Christians we do in the presence and company of God, and if we think about it, we can make it a part of our life with him. He has already done this on his part. He has picked out a couple of very important things

in human life and taken them over as important activities in his life with us. One of these is marriage.

Marriage is a natural for God's purposes because it is made up of the same kind of things that God wants in man's relationship with him. It is first of all based on love, and we know that if there is one thing that characterizes God's attitude toward us, it is love. We know that he loved us so much that he was willing to become one of us, to suffer and die for us. We know, too, that there is nothing God would rather have from us than our own love for him. This love and the desire for it from the other person is also found in marriage. Furthermore, marriage is a union of persons; two people give themselves over to each other for keeps in a way that is more than friendship or loyalty or simple partnership. This is the closest unity we know of between people. That's another reason why God is so interested in marriage. He wants an ever closer union personally with each one of us. Marriage is a great help in bringing this about.

Marriage also has two people sharing a life in common. God's invitation to man is similar. He invites us to share his life with him in an even closer way than two human beings can.

Another important feature of marriage is the fact that it is through marriage that people are brought into the world and eventually into the life of God. So, marriage is important to God's plan for sharing his life with men. He looks to married people to help him in the progress and growth of his plan by bringing more and more human beings under it.

So, in all of these ways human marriage has a great part in the plan of man's salvation. It is the great example of total love between people and its presence in the world is a very real reminder that there is a perfect and enduring love possible. If two human beings can do this, certainly this means that God can do at least as well,—that the kind of happiness that perfect love can bring is possible to all people because God loves all of us.

MARRIAGE AND SALVATION HISTORY

Marriage has been involved with the history of our salvation right from the beginning. God created human beings in such a way that they would find happiness in each other. Thus they would learn the basic human truth that man is not meant to live in isolation from others but is meant to find himself in another person, — in human beings in incomplete ways, and in God, in a perfect way.

► Reading from Gen. 2:18, 21-25

Right from the beginning, then, God taught men through marriage that they were meant for others. Then when Jesus came, he gave marriage a new depth because the relationship between God and man got new depth in him. We have seen that the union between God and man that Christ has brought to us is the closest personal union possible. That the Christian can actually live the life of God with him as if it were his very own. Because of this,

the close personal union that is marriage has new depths too.

First, it is a sign of the union between God and man.

► Reading from Eph. 5:21-33

The love of human beings for one another in the Christian life is like the love of Christ for his people, the Church. This means that marriage now has new possibilities. It can bring people not only closer to one another but also closer to God. Because of the fact that two Christians are united each to Christ, this means that when they get married they each bring Christ and his life into their marriage too. It means that they share their marriage with him as they do with one another, and it means that they grow in love of God as well as love for one another if they work hard at their marriage. Christian marriage is not only a great school for the love of God, but it is also a special way in which God communicates his love and himself to the married couple. Each time that a Christian couple expresses their love for one another in any genuine way, whether through the marriage act or the simplest task of self-sacrifice and consideration for the other, Christ uses that human expression of love as a way to communicate his own love to the couple. This is the "sacrament" of marriage. Married love is a way in which God gives more of his life to us.

CONTINUING MINISTERS OF GRACE

The sacrament of marriage goes on all through married life. It is not just the ceremony. The couple are the ministers of this sacrament all of their lives by the way in which they live it. Each party becomes the means through whom Christ gives himself to the other person. It is possible then, for people to grow day by day in the love of God through their married life.

Marriage is permanent because God's love for his people is permanent. He never takes it back no matter what man does. The married Christian reflects this fidelity in the permanence of his partnership.

► Reading from Mk. 10:2-12

There is no divorce for Christians because there is no divorce between Christ and his Church. Both are for keeps.

**CREATIVE
ELEMENT
IN SEX**

Sex is an important part of marriage because love is creative. It was the love of God that created man in the first place. God was so good that he wanted to share himself with others, and since originally there were no others but God, he created people for this purpose. His love for us led him to give us new life with him even after man had rebelled and left God. Now, he shares his creative love with human beings so that humans at their best, i.e., when they give themselves to each other in the unselfish love of marriage, they too can be creative. The creation of other people is tied to human love, and this is one of the most important aspects of marriage. Not only does marriage bring out the best that humans are capable of, — their most unselfish love, but it also gives them the opportunity to share in the creative work of God. That is why sex is so sacred. It is a physical giving of one person completely to another. It should express a complete spiritual gift of a person to his spouse. It is not something to be used selfishly for personal pleasure alone. It is meant to be used creatively and is a reminder that in the creative work of God man's greatest happiness is to be found.

God expects people to live their life with him in marriage the way he does with his Church, i.e., lovingly, selflessly and creatively. He does not expect people to take on more than they can care for in a family, but he does not expect them to separate sex from his purposes either. That is the sin of birth control, — the selfish use of

sex and the exclusion of God's creative act. Man cannot share the life of God if he works at cross purposes with God.

His life with God is lived in the Church and he looks to the Church for guidance in his married life as in everything else that he shares with God. At the present time, there is much discussion about the morality of birth control in different situations and through different ways. There is much confusion too, but the Christian looks to the Church with confidence that God will guide his people, as he always has. The Christian can follow the Church's teaching in the certainty that God's life will continue to be communicated to his people in their married life.

**THE
PERSONAL
ELEMENT**

Because marriage is the closest possible union between human beings it demands a great deal of married people. It calls for great sacrifices and patience and understanding and unselfishness. But at the same time, if a person gives of himself he will find great happiness and love. Happiness for human beings comes from giving. This is the great lesson God wants us to learn because our greatest happiness can come only from giving ourselves to the greatest of all persons, God. That is why he is so concerned about marriage. That is why he uses it as one of the principal means to bring men closer to himself. He uses the love of marriage, the sharing of life that goes on in it, the joys and companionship, the unity, the creativity, — all of these things he uses to teach us and to help us grow accustomed to them so that we can be ready for our life with God. In that life all of these elements are present in an undreamed of degree, and man's happiness is total and everlasting.

(Continued on next page)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

What part does marriage play in God's plan for man?

What is special about Christian marriage?

What important truths does God teach us through marriage?

Why can't sex be separated from marriage?

Why must marriage be permanent?

*How does Christ communicate his life in a special way
to married people?*

What is the effect of daily married life on Christian living?

BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY:

"Union in Marital Love"—Marc Oraison (Macmillan)

"Christian Marriage"—J. Richard Quinn (Paulist Doctrinal Series)

I must contend that my personal relationship with God is different from every other person's. This does not mean that there is no objective reality in God or that we may not all worship the same God. It is the intimate and eternal riddle of love which sets up different waves of relationship between the lover and the beloved. God is sufficiently great to love each one of us and yet to love each one of us in a different way.

We can no longer enter a classroom or stand at a pulpit with the idea that we have all the answers to give. We have only, but sufficiently, the revelation which God has given us and our own reaction to it. We cannot give pat answers which will satisfy everyone, but we must use God's story of Himself and of His dealing with men to stimulate in other human beings their own reaction, their own joy, their own love.

Bishop Carter

Books Received

A Christian Understanding of Existence

Joseph Lange, O.S.F.S.

The Newman Press. \$4.50

Father Lange, greatly influenced by Francis de Sales' *Introduction to a Devout Life*, presents a good description of Christian living in the climate of our age, and in the context of a renewal of Christianity. His book is divided into three sections. Part one treats of "The Human Condition" and develops themes like "being-in-the-world," "being-with-others," and "being-in-history." Here he translates the existentialists for the ordinary reader. Section two is an excellent example of serious reflection on phases of "Salvation History." In the last section the writer is concerned with the implications of "Living in Christ." Here he relates the previous principles to practical matters like prayer, the sacraments, spiritual guidance, suffering and conscience. We do not yet have a book of the classic proportions of the *Introduction*, by de Sales. But the present book is a very good contribution to Christian spirituality for our own day.

Open to the World

Alfons Auer

Helicon. \$5.95

In striving to apply the directives of Vatican II, Christians increasingly recognize the central position of the laity and their true vocation in the world. How clearly we recognize this fact and carry out its implications may well be decisive in measuring the extent of our response to the Spirit's action in our day. Father Auer faces the unholy division which now exists between the secular human world and the religion of Christ; and he presents an analysis of lay spirituality as a contribution towards closing this gap.

The writer is one of the younger German theologians who has won the respect

of his theological confreres everywhere and a wide acceptance among influential lay people. While mainly confining himself to lay spirituality for living in a secular atmosphere, he throws light on dozens of topics that sadly need revision in the minds of the rank and file of Christianity. His few pages on Miracles, for example, could cause a transformation in the layman's understanding of many Sunday Gospels.

Teilhard once referred to "the great schism which threatened the Church," namely, "the fact that 'Christian' and 'human' no longer tend to coincide." It is this glaring breach which Father Auer is concerned to bridge. This very good book contains ten chapters divided into the history, theology and practical aspects of the layman's Christian vocation. It richly deserves a wide reading among the laity, clergy and religious.

Beginning Life in Christ

Rosemary Haughton

The Newman Press. \$4.50

Rosemary Haughton, that sensible and down-to-earth person, here gives us one of the best books on religious education to appear in many a long day. It is a book primarily for parents and educators themselves, rather than a readymade series of fifteen easy lessons to give to someone else. Since the "beginning and end of Christianity is Christ" this is where she finds her point of departure and goal.

Each chapter considers various stages in the earthly life of Christ and fundamental aspects of his teaching. These she contemplates with unusual understanding to discover what illumination they shed on the tasks that face all, who at any level, give witness to Christ today. While primarily concerned with the religious education of children (she is the mother of nine) what she says is of immense help to anyone who in any way discusses the Christian way of life.

She has assimilated the best insights of contemporary Christian scholarship and has read widely and profitably in the personalist philosophy. Best of all, she has applied these gospel teachings to each of her growing children and always keeps an eye on how these things actually work out in real life. She insists that real knowledge grows only out of experience and honestly admits that she once "conscientiously taught nonsense" and published that nonsense!

It is refreshing to be told that "a Christian who does not know himself to be, in the end, humbly and confidently, an agnostic, is a very inadequate and conceited Christian." No less refreshing is the author's forthright statement of her purpose: "If I can persuade Christian parents to think about these (Christian ideas) once more, and to feel baffled by them, then that is some indication that we are trying to deal with Christianity as something real, and —like all reality—impossible to enclose, explain completely, or tidy up."

The Word in History
Editor, T. Patrick Burke
Sheed and Ward. \$4.50

This is a collection of papers read by eminent theologians at the notable St. Xavier Symposium in Chicago last year. The speakers were asked to consider the most urgent contemporary problems facing Christians and to treat them in their Christian, theological and ecumenical aspects. The result was a brilliant presentation of crucial theological themes by acknowledged leaders and moulders of religious thinking.

Speakers included men like De Lubac, Lindbeck, Karl Rahner, Schillebeeckx, J. B. Metz, Jean Danielou and others. Topics ranged from issues like Freedom, Faith, the basic issues between Protestantism and Catholicism, and a paper on Understanding the Eucharist by Charles Davis. In the light of the decisive action later taken by Charles Davis on the issue of the nature of the Church, readers will find Yves Congar's frank treatment of "Institutionalized Religion" of poignant interest and relevancy. Theology cannot be made easy. But outstanding books like this make current theological thinking more widely available and influential.

The Last Discourse of Jesus
G. M. Behler, O.P.
Helicon. \$5.95

The writer treats the significant chapters 13-17 in St. John's gospel by joining elements of solid reflection with theological and exegetical scholarship. These varied aspects blend easily in the writer's ability to grasp and convey the deeper aspects of Christ's farewell message to his disciples and friends. Each verse is considered with the *Bible of Jerusalem* as the basic text; otherwise, the Knox edition is used.

The writer seems to confine himself to the many studies in French as the source for his close scrutiny of these precious words of Christ. His commentary is enriched by his frequent appeal to the Fathers of the Church, particularly to the works of Origen and St. Augustine. The sometimes less happy biblical exegesis of the Fathers is not so pronounced in these sections of St. John and their profound theological insights are manifest in full splendor.

J.T.M.

GUIDE

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Guide Lights

DREAMS FOR '67 . . .

This is the time of year when a man's thoughts take a forward bent and he allows himself the luxury of imagining them about to be accomplished. In the still bright warmth of 1967's beginnings, I would like to indulge in some not-impossible dreams about religious education. Not-impossible, because they represent existing things that could grow and converge with other seedlings into a process of education congenial to both Christianity and the modern world. And which of us, at the outset of any year, does not dream of that?

EDUCATION TOOLS . . .

Since Vatican II has provided substance enough to take us well beyond 1967, more practical dreaming centers on tools and techniques and their potential for religious education.

There is a widening gap between developments in education generally, and their application to religious education. We in the Church have not begun to exploit the possibilities of some of the educational techniques which are now accepted as a matter of course by other educators. This doesn't mean that many individuals or whole school systems in the Church haven't done so, but it does mean that these techniques are not so integrated into our thinking about communication of the faith that their absence is remarkable. In other words, they remain the exception rather than the rule.

GROUP DYNAMICS . . .

A good example is the use of group dynamics. Most people, including Church teachers, clergy and lay, today recognize that discussion is somehow helpful to learning and that it has a place in the school and in adult parish programs. However,

are we really getting all of the mileage out of this tool that can be had? I don't think so when you consider that, apart from trained teachers, most of us priests and volunteer catechists have only a kind of practical art we have developed in handling groups in discussion and action. We have developed this through trial and error to a point where our experience has given us a certain feel for what we are doing. This is good, but should we settle for this and no more? Can't we go beyond our own experience and learn something of the science of group dynamics so that the full potential of learning resources in every group can be turned to good account? What really makes group discussion work is the fact that there are certain forces at work within every group which affect the character of the group, the relationship of the persons within it, and the inter-communication among them. These forces are always operating whether we advert to them or not. The science of group dynamics teaches us how to control and direct them toward constructive learning. This is simply a description of group dynamics generally. The educators go far beyond this and try to get at the particular forces that enter into the whole of man's learning processes. Man learns through the interaction of a lot of things, all of which contribute something or raise an obstacle. These include the teacher, — his presentation, personality and material; the reaction of the learner or his absence of reaction; the reaction of others to the teacher and to other members of the class; the learner's reaction to their reaction; and so on. This is only a clumsy sketch of the kind of thing that is involved.

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY . . .

I emphasize this one activity particularly, because it seems so closely related to Christianity, concerned as we are with building community and sanctifying human relations. The history of every group of persons, how-

ever short-lived, tends toward the development of a group identity and a unique pattern of personal relationships. This is true for groups of religious learners as well. If at the outset of a person's experience of Christianity he is drawn towards the Church in a communal structure in which he helps give and receive from his neighbor what the Church is communicating to him, then he begins Christian life with a definite advantage. Within his first *ecclesiola*, or Christian primary group, he has already found a community structure and personal exchange, — something we are now trying to help the Church generally to discover within our congregations and parishes. If the size and impersonality of the latter present great barriers to building a sense of Christian community, then we ought to concentrate on the groupings that more naturally lend themselves to this task. Religion classes, adult discussion clubs and convert catechesis readily fall within this category.

DIALOGUE WITH EDUCATORS . . .

Another avenue of dream ends in a dialogue between the religious and secular educators of our land. These have happened before and presumably will again. But they have been concerned with the institutional frictions and adjustments that make for orderly living in a pluralist society. My dream (and it came to me through some professional religious educators) is of a dialogue about the total education of Americans, — a dialogue free of Church-State issues and dedicated to what makes for good education. This dialogue would include the relationship between religious and other education, and explore the ways in which each could help prepare a learner for the other. It might begin an exchange of education experience and a sharing, not of physical resources which are perhaps the least important, but of practical wisdom and technique that would help bring unity to what is after all a single task, viz., the education of human beings. This dialogue can proceed at many levels but might be most constructive locally where, in fact, the same people are being educated by both parties to the dialogue.

THE WORLD AS TEXTBOOK . . .

Today the Church tells us that God speaks to man in diverse tongues and from unexpected places. His words must be heard, interpreted and heeded. To do this, we must range far and wide across our times

and culture. This requires other learning tools and perhaps the invention of some new ones. One beginning that is opening a path is the use of movies in religious education. I am not referring now to educational films or visual aids; they have their own more limited place. Rather, I refer to the use of regular Hollywood and foreign productions such as "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" or some of Bergman's films. These are used, not so much as a teaching aid, but as a textbook of the modern world. They contain a slice of the times and the flavor of man today. As such, they say something real and important and, as we now know, God may be saying something through them, too. In this type of religious education, you focus the attention of the learner on part of his world and help him interpret what it has to say. The Gospel serves as counterpoint. The great value of this procedure is that by reading the Christian message in front of a genuine backdrop of today's world, the discovery of its relevance is thereby eased. This teaching dimension has been very well received where tried and promises to grow rapidly.

PERSONAL PIETY AFTER VATICAN II . . .

The last dream is one of man's personal relations with God. We have seen systematic devotion and novena go by the boards as the general Catholic practice. Liturgy is expanding into the vacuum, but there still remains that uniquely personal need of private prayer. Men and women today need a form of piety suited to the climate of our time, both religious and secular. This won't happen suddenly and our concern is with beginnings. When a starting point is uncertain, it is well to return to sources and perhaps the Bible is the best place to begin for most of us. Not just casual or intellectually curious reading of the Bible, but rather a listening to the Word of God that is spoken to me outside of its pages. These carry it to me but when I listen, the book is pushed aside and God speaks to me where I am and I respond from my situation. While this prayer is personal, it is not necessarily exclusive and my dialogue with God can include others, with all that this means in terms of the group dynamics mentioned above. Married couples and others with shared interests might find this type of piety especially rewarding. But a tough and resilient piety is a real need of our time.

JOSEPH V. GALLAGHER, C.S.P.

Guide

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